

ADC's FUTURING PROCESS FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING

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INTRODUCTION

The constituency base interested in wildlife is changing from the traditional sportsmen to include diverse special interest groups. Their views about the maintenance of wildlife is also challenging the traditional foundations of wildlife management, because they see wildlife not as a consumptive resource requiring regulation and control, but as a necessary component of global biodiversity for future generations to enjoy. Thus, the constituencies concerned with wildlife are changing, splintering, and diversifying (Gasson and White 1993). Wildlife managers need to recognize that their survival and overall effectiveness in the future may depend upon their ability to effectively use planning processes to change with the times (Crowe 1989).

Almost daily we are affected by changes in our lives. In 10 years, at least one fourth of all current knowledge will be obsolete; the life span of new technologies is down to 18 months and decreasing (Amend 1993). So, probably never before has the hackneyed phrase been so true, "the only constant is change" (MacKinnon 1984). All resource managers have seen the management of future impacts grow into a significant portion of their strategic planning process (Shroufe 1993). Although future possibilities often seem limitless and overwhelming, future probabilities are often taken for granted (Gentilman and Nelson 1983). Peters and Waterman's (1982) landmark book on the management of America's best-run companies stated that effective agencies are forward-looking and proactive in dealing with issues. They are constantly looking ahead, actively tracking social and political trends that may affect them (McMullin 1993). Crowe (1983) described a strategic planning process that focused on the following four simple questions: Where are we? Where do we want to be? How do we get there? Did we make it?

Futuring

We believe futuring is a new management process that is essential for developing an organization's strategic plan by focusing on Crowe's (1983) first two questions (above) -- where are we, and where do we want to go? Futuring is becoming a critical management skill (MacKinnon 1984), and Braun (1993) has suggested that there are two approaches to fostering future-oriented thinking: trend analysis and strategic planning. We believe that the former is part of the futuring process (FP) and the latter is the outcome. Trend analysis is an attempt to anticipate emerging patterns which will impact how we do business and what type of business we will do in the future. It's a search for indicators of fundamental social, economic, political, and technological change beyond our normal programmatic thinking (Braun 1993). Futuring should not extend present trends into the future without critically analyzing them, and it should not focus only on dedicating resources and organizational energies to the defense-of-the-past by going back to the future (Ramey et al. 1992). Additionally, futuring produces a strategic plan that provides for doing new things but with provisions for maintaining the present activities or evolving from them. Therefore, futuring results in a commitment of immediate resources through a strategic plan, and it deals with the future impacts of these decisions (Smith and Smallwood 1983). The basic question in futuring is not what an organization should do tomorrow, but what do we have to do today to be ready for an uncertain tomorrow. For example, if it takes 50 years to grow a conifer to pulpwood size, futuring does not recommend that we have more trees in 50 years or blindly forecast that we will have more trees in 50 years. Futuring recommends that we should plant seedlings today and nurture them tomorrow in order to be ready for an uncertain future. Similarly, futuring does not attempt to foresee new technologies such as the advent of silvicultural growth hormones to shorten this process. Therefore, we define the futuring process (FP) as a management process for developing an organization's future-focused strategic plan.

Strategic Planning

Planning systems and processes are becoming very important to all organizations including wildlife agencies that are newcomers to planning that integrates the ever changing socioeconomic, political, and technical climates with wildlife resource management policies, programs, and strategic plans (Amend 1993). Futuring integrates the historical and current status of the organization with an analysis of trends in human dimension data to stimulate creative thinking about the organization's future role. The strategic plan is the implementation document; it receives the outputs of the FP in the form of recommendations and information which is utilized to direct strategic changes within the organization and its programs. The goal of strategic planning is to establish a vision for the organization and specific recommendations and/or decisions to achieve that long-range vision. To be successful, the strategic plan derived from the FP requires a high level of commitment at all levels of the organization, empowerment of the participants, and an extensive degree of flexibility and creativity. The strategic plan should answer the last 2 questions in Crowe's (1983) model - how do we get there and did we make it?

This article will share the process used in gathering, synthesizing, and drawing implications of probable future conditions and events that may shape the Animal Damage Control (ADC) program, administered by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). It will outline a new 5-phase Futuring Process Model (FPM) that led to ADC's 1993 Strategic Plan. The importance of each phase will be discussed starting with empowerment, followed by team building, skill building, information inventory and trend analysis, and the formulation of the strategic plan. The final sections will specifically review ADC's use of the FPM, the future course that has been charted for ADC, and the lessons learned.

THE ADC FUTURING MODEL AND PROCESS

In 1993, the ADC program (Program) completed a more complex planning model than the traditional fish and wildlife management approach reflected in the missionary model of Barnhart and Henshaw (1993). Messages and plans in that model are preached to the public, and public acceptance is sought on faith. Whereas, the FPM tries to provide for a more inclusive role for all levels of employees and other interested parties including the public in the 5-phase process (Fig. 1). We believe that this approach is more closely in tune with the long-term stewardship of wildlife. ADC's Management Team (MT) initiated a Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) that utilized this process to develop the Program's first broad-based, future-focused Strategic Plan.

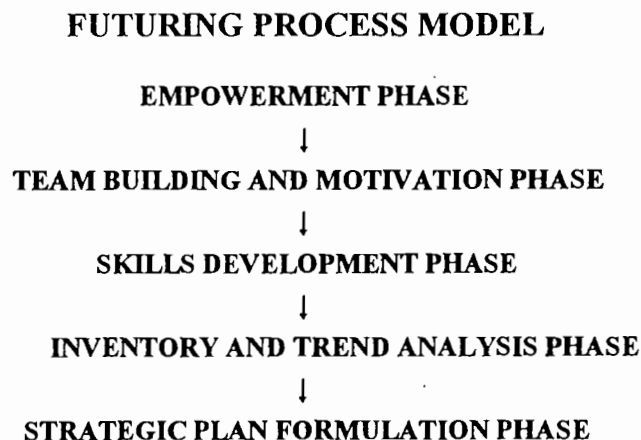


Figure 1. An employee-based futuring model that assists agencies in formulating a strategic plan.

Empowerment Phase

Management has really no choice but to anticipate the future and attempt to mold the organization to meet the future in relation to the organization's goals (Drucker 1974), because organizations that fail to accept and embrace change usually do not survive. Various styles of management seem to differ in how they deal with change. One of the most prevalent styles of management is hierarchical with centralized direction and control. It has been successful in various

bureaucracies such as religious, military, and governmental agencies. The line of authority or command proceeds directly down from the top through the various layers of the organization with a commensurate decreasing delegation of authority. This style of management has been related to McGregor's (1960) Theory X which states that employees inherently dislike work, need to be directed, and avoid responsibility. In hierarchical organizations, strategic planning is accomplished by top management. In contrast, McGregor's Theory Y suggests that the workers' commitment to organizational objectives is associated with their own achievement of personal goals such as self-satisfaction and self-esteem. This theory suggests that when personnel are empowered, they will seek more responsibility and will exercise a higher degree of imagination, ingenuity, and creativity in the solution of organizational problems. Theory Y suggests that the limits on human collaboration for organizational needs are not controlled by human nature, but by a lack of management's ingenuity in discovering how to realize the potential of its human resources. In these organizations, dedicated employees are considered its most valuable resource (McMullin 1993).

Team Building and Motivation Phase

How do you obtain the cooperation of others? A major ingredient in the answer to this question is motivation (Rakich et al. 1977), a complex field of behavioral study. Maslow (1943) formulated one of the most widely known theories of motivation based on a hierarchy of needs with higher needs becoming dominant or sought when lower needs are satisfied. He believed that man is a wanting animal whose needs depend on what he already has. The five levels of his hierarchy of needs, starting at the lowest level, are briefly described as: (1) physiological (i.e., food, shelter), (2) safety, (3) social activity (i.e., belonging to groups such as family and work), (4) status (i.e., self-esteem), and (5) self-realization (i.e., creativity). Management styles that focus on employee needs while joining them with organizational needs, seem to adapt to change easier; however, Drucker (1990) has stated that despite having a top management with great ability and a dedicated staff the more successful organizations also build teams. Futuring teamwork naturally leads to involvement and ownership during the process of change (Gasson and White 1993).

Skill Development Phase

One of the requirements for a successful futuring process is the development of the primary futuring skill: projecting trends and visualizing possible and probable futures and their implications (Gentilman and Nelson 1983). Projecting diverse trends into the future is assisted by networking with colleagues and other people of very different backgrounds and/or perspectives, but with interest in the project. Diverse views form the foundations of the visualization process. Visualizing allows the participants to contemplate various outcomes from information by discussing the various possibilities and probabilities they create (Gwain 1978, Bair and Bry 1979). This allows implications to be drawn from the different scenarios and injects reality into the process before recommendations are derived in the final consensus forming step.

Inventory and Trend Analysis Phase

The Inventory Phase is composed of 2 parts: (1) the review of the historical foundations and current status of the organization, and (2) the collection of biological, social, economic, and political information that can be analyzed by trend analysis in an effort to anticipate change (Gasson and White 1993). The inventory phase concludes when a visionary mission for the organization has been determined in relation to the result of the analyses. Naisbitt (1982) brought attention to the importance of trend analysis in planning; wildlife agencies are just now beginning to see the usefulness of trend information about demographics, social awareness, societal attitudes, and consumer values of the public they serve in determining their management policies and in redefining the profile of an effective wildlife agency (Amend 1993).

Strategic Plan Formulation Phase

According to Drucker (1974), the future will not just happen if one wishes it hard enough: it requires decisions now, it imposes risks now, it demands the allocation of resources now! The idea of long-range planning (i.e., strategic planning), and much of its reality and success, rests on an understanding of a number points. First, strategic plans are largely composed of short-run decisions. Second, unless the long range is built into and based on present decisions, even the most elaborate long-range plan will soon be obsolete and be viewed in hindsight as having been an exercise in futility. Third, the converse is also true, unless the short-range decisions are integrated into one long-range plan of action, some precious resources will be misdirected. Finally, the difference between short-range and long-range decisions is not

determined by the time span required to implement the decision, but by the time span over which the decision is effective (Drucker 1974).

The FC developed 132 recommendations and many of them seemed to reflect Herzberg et al.'s (1959) theory of motivation, that people have two sets of needs: maintenance factors versus motivators. Maintenance factors dissatisfy employees when they are absent, but their presence does not necessarily lead to a higher degree of motivation. These include: organizational policy and administration, technical supervision, interpersonal relations, salary, job security, personal life, work conditions, and status. In contrast, motivational factors satisfy employees, and if present, they tend to build higher levels of motivation and job satisfaction. They include: achievement, recognition, advancement, growth, responsibility, and ethics.

OVERVIEW OF THE ADC FUTURING PROCESS

Empowerment Phase

The FP was initiated early in 1991 when the Deputy Administrator for the ADC program presented the futuring concept to the MT for discussion. With their support, he made two decisions that in hindsight greatly contributed to the success of the futuring process. First, he involved all levels of employees - a vertical slice through the organization from top to bottom on the FC (Acord 1992). Second, he empowered them with the responsibility and authority to identify critical outputs and competencies to position the Program for success in the next century by developing a strategy for how the Program should evolve in the years ahead (Acord 1992).

Team Building and Motivation Phase

The first meeting of the Futuring Committee was held in Denver, CO, August 6-8, 1991. The Committee represented not only all levels of employees, but also external representatives from the wildlife management profession and academia. The facilitated sessions provided a forum for discussing the Program's future. The first day was devoted to presentations by stakeholders requiring program assistance, animal welfare groups, and personnel from the wildlife management community to the FC. They provided information about the Program's statutory roots, the current level of services, and possible future directions for discussion. These presentations set the stage for change.

During the next two days, the 24 four members of the FC were divided into three working groups to address three broad areas of the ADC program -- management, professionalism, and methods. The creative atmosphere that was produced provided for the interchange of ideas among participants with many learning from the other's point-of-view. During team building, the employees developed a set of commitments for interacting and maintaining the team such as: respect others, act with integrity, be open, and resolve conflicts. It was soon apparent that they shared many of the same ideas, concerns, and apprehensions about how a brainstorming process would work. Such apprehensions have been observed by other futuring groups (Shroufe 1993), but these anxieties began to subside as their futuring skills developed, and they focused on the organization.

Skill Development Phase

When the FC was asked to think about the ADC program's future, most members were initially restricted in this endeavor by their own hierarchy of needs (Maslow 1943). They developed future goals for the Program that seemed to mirror personal goals and needs such as salary, hiring practices, job descriptions, and other personnel issues reflecting lower levels of needs. Recommendations about higher levels of needs such as ethics, professionalism, personal growth, and self-esteem came later. During this period, futuring skills were slowly developing as members began to think creatively and relatively free of daily personal problems. The shift in focus to the long-term viability of the organization was not easy and required the realization that we had been provided the opportunity to become change agents in our own professional lives.

Inventory and Trend Analysis Phase

ADC Program's Historical Foundations.--During the inventory phase of the FPM, members discussed the foundations of the Program including the Animal Damage Control Act of March 2, 1931, as amended (46 Stat. 1468: 7 U.S.C. 426-426c) which provides the USDA with the authority to conduct wildlife damage control activities and remains the Program's primary statutory authority. It may also be constraining the Program by forming a frame of reference about the Program's role in wildlife damage management (Acord 1991). The Futuring Committee referred to the act in order to understand our historical paradigm and how much things have changed over the years. Discussions involved the following excerpt from the Act:

The Secretary of Agriculture is authorized and directed to conduct such investigations, experiments, and tests as he may deem necessary in order to determine, demonstrate, and promulgate the best methods of eradication, suppression, or bringing under control on national forests and other areas of the public domain as well as on State, Territory, on privately owned lands of mountain lions, wolves, coyotes, bobcats, prairie dogs, gophers, ground squirrels, jack rabbits, and other animals injurious to agriculture, horticulture, forestry, animal husbandry, wild game animals, fur-bearing animals, and birds, and for the protection of stock and other domestic animals through the suppression of rabies and tularemia in predatory or other wild animals; and to conduct campaigns for the destruction or control of such animals...

This important governmental service, the Programs's role, is still as important today as it was then; however, its references to eradication, suppression, and conducting campaigns for the destruction is reflective of societal attitudes then towards wildlife species as pests of agriculture or natural resources and a general antipathy towards predators (Acord 1991). Yet, within the Program, most of the thinking had become so homogeneous or inbred that new ideas or thoughts which did not meet our tradition-based test or were outside our paradigm were viewed with suspicion and skepticism; our defense mechanisms were so strong that opportunities for change were not recognized, much less acted upon (Acord 1991). Additional statutory authority was also discussed including the Rural Development, Agriculture, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 1988 (Public Law 100-202), and how it reflects a more current interpretation of the original Act:

That hereafter, the Secretary of Agriculture is authorized, except for urban rodent control, to conduct activities and to enter into agreements with States, local jurisdictions, individuals, and public and private agencies, organizations, and institutions in the control of nuisance mammals and birds and those mammal and bird species that are reservoirs for zoonotic diseases...

Following extensive discussions, it became obvious to the FC that as we face the challenges and opportunities ahead, we needed to make a paradigm shift (Covey 1989) to a new programmatic paradigm with a win-win orientation, that is tradition-based but not tradition bound!

Trend Analysis.--For the ADC program, trend analysis identified the changes in the organization and in the American social scene since the turn of the century. Over the years, the Program has carried out its responsibilities to cooperators with dedication; however, by the 1960's, society's attitudes toward wildlife damage management were changing with a greater emphasis placed on both environmental awareness and wildlife protectionism. These attitudes probably evolved in part from the urbanization of America, with the advent of two-earner families and from more leisure time. As America moved away from a predominantly rural economy, such changes inevitably led to more scrutiny of the Program.

In 1986, a major change impacted the Program when the ADC function was transferred from the U.S. Department of Interior to USDA. This transfer provided the opportunity for a more proactive approach in dealing with critical issues and program changes rather than reacting to external forces. Shortly after the transfer, the ADC program initiated an intensive effort to develop a strategic long-range plan. The Program's MT identified and assessed apparent program strengths and weaknesses, external influences and relationships, and conditions and factors that would ensure continued Program viability and vitality. Based on these factors, the MT developed a strategic plan in 1989 with a set of 6 strategic goals for ADC (Acord 1992). However, this process was accomplished without employee representation and external group inputs and seemed to suffer from the lack of a broader paradigm.

In comparison, the Futuring Committee with broader representation focused more on future trends. The first significant future trend they discussed was the increasing need for wildlife professionals to include social, economic, political, and cultural information in planning wildlife management decisions as much as biological knowledge. Five other major trends were discussed by the FC and are presented below in the 1993 ADC Strategic Plan.

Strategic Plan Formulation Phase

During the meetings in September 1991, each subcommittee's recommendations were drafted. The intervening one month hiatus had allowed for peer discussions, second thoughts, and a rethinking of the initial recommendations by each group. In January 1992, all three groups were combined to produce a consolidated draft document. The major objectives were to produce a strategic vision and synthesize the massive volume of input from the three independent committees into a manageable and usable form. The facilitator also tried to fine tune the Committee's futuring skills through the use of analogies and a basic understanding of the theories of management and group dynamics. The resulting document, which consisted of an explicit vision statement and an attachment with each groups' separate recommendations, was approved by consensus. The achievement of an overall consensus among over 30 participants was not easy; in fact, discussions often revolved around ADC's past and the present. But as the Futuring Committee slowly learned "if we open a quarrel between the past and the present, we shall find that we have lost the future." (Sir Winston Churchill).

In March 1992, the scribes (recorders) and facilitator consolidated the draft recommendations into 57 final recommendations and generated a futuristic management philosophy. This document was provided to a professional writer and, with further input from the MT, it was incorporated into a 1992 draft Strategic Plan. The draft was presented for review and comment to the Eastern and Western State Directors and staff of the Denver Wildlife Research Center (DWRC). Their recommendations were incorporated into the 1993 ADC Strategic Plan. However, the accomplishments of the FC were viewed only as good intentions, until the MT committed resources and assigned key individuals to accomplish the tasks.

ADC PROGRAM's 1993 STRATEGIC PLAN

The Strategic Plan with its 6 subsections and recommendations provides the promise for the Program's future. The subsections have been summarized and are presented below: (1) background, (2) mission, (3) vision, (4) trends, (5) comparative advantages, and (6) strategic areas.

Subsections

Background.--The 1993 ADC Strategic Plan presents a strategic vision for the Program. It builds upon the 1989 Strategic Plan, incorporates concepts of the Environmental Impact Statement (USDA 1993), reflects changes in society, and draws upon and brings to a conclusion the futuring process.

Mission.--The mission of the Program is to provide federal leadership in managing and solving problems caused by wildlife to agricultural, industrial, and other natural resources, or to public health and safety.

Vision.--The Program will use strategies designed to reduce wildlife mortality to the lowest possible levels while also reducing damage caused by wildlife to the lowest possible levels, because of legitimate public interests in wildlife including conservation, biological diversity, animal welfare, enjoyment, recreation, and livelihood. This vision is expressed in the ADC slogan -- "Living with wildlife".

Trends.--The five major trends which the Program expects to continue in the future are: (1) suburban development will continue to intrude on wildlife habitat; yet (2) population expansions of adaptable wildlife species will pose risks to humans; (3) these factors will heighten media interest in wildlife as well as human and wildlife interactions; (4) the shift in public attitudes towards animal welfare and protectionism will continue, but may be tempered by human health, safety, and economic issues; and (5) advances in science and technology will assist new methods research.

Comparative Advantages.--The Program is building its future upon its employees, skilled in wildlife damage management in all of the nation's ecological zones, and the world's only research center devoted entirely to the development of methods for wildlife damage management.

Strategic Areas.--The Program is committed to helping meet the wildlife damage management needs of the nation by building upon its comparative strengths in three key areas: personnel, methods, and communications. The primary resource for attaining our vision will be the building of employee skills and professionalism, and the key means will be the development and utilization of new and effective methods. The essential organizational element needed to achieve our vision will be increased communications among our employees, cooperators, other agencies, and the public about the purpose and methods of wildlife damage management.

THE FUTURING COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS

A summary of the Futuring Committee's 57 recommendations is presented below and has been grouped according to three broad areas of program emphasis: personnel, management, and communication. Nearly 45% of these recommendations were accomplished in 1993, the remainder are in various stages of implementation with completion scheduled for 1994 or 1995. Only time will tell if the Futuring Process Model assisted the ADC program in positioning itself for the promise of the future.

Personnel

- ▶ Employees will reflect a diverse and professional staff, oriented in ethics and the policies, procedures, and mission of the agency using a modern interpretation of the 1931 Act to support our new vision.
- ▶ Employees will function within clear job descriptions, performance standards, and individual development plans that reflect professional excellence and expectations.
- ▶ Employees will have service-long flexible training and cooperative education opportunities to maximally support their individual responsibilities and personal career goals.
- ▶ Employees will have the opportunity to wear a uniform, sporting a logo and will be provided support by a responsive and service oriented personnel and public relations staffs.

Methods

- ▶ DWRC will increase its recognized leadership in wildlife damage management by: conducting broad-based brainstorming symposia to generate new ideas in methods research and measurement techniques for analyzing program results (i.e. cost and effectiveness), developing socially acceptable methods, supporting data requirements to meet registration and reregistration needs, and becoming a central repository for published information on wildlife damage management.
- ▶ DWRC will achieve this result by: seeking additional funding sources through cooperative arrangements with universities, state and federal agencies, registrants, and wildlife organizations; providing a responsive research service that develops and transfers technology to operations through cooperative training; and monitoring its progress and results through periodic program evaluations.

Communications

- ▶ Program success will ultimately depend not just on motivated and well-trained employees supported by new or improved methods derived from research, but on communications with those who receive the services we provide as well as the general public.
- ▶ Communications will be improved with cooperators by improving the preparation of cooperative agreements, having joint involvement in the Program's planned operations, and developing fact sheets.
- ▶ Communications will be improved with the general public by increasing public affairs training and activities including media releases, videos, annual accomplishment reports, educational involvement activities, and encouraging employees to become involved in community activities.

- Communications will be improved among field-level employees, the states, regions, and Washington, D.C. by developing and implementing a consistent program planning, monitoring, and evaluating process using a nationwide MIS system, information feedback, and an employee newsletter.

CONCLUSIONS

Predicting the future is virtually impossible; however, the management philosophy of a successful organization will be one of anticipating change rather than expecting the status quo, and the most successful agencies will stimulate change and seek out new opportunities (Amend 1993). In 1992, nine of the most effective fish and wildlife agencies in the U. S. gathered to discuss their successes, concerns, and future needs. Among the needs they identified were: increased involvement of agency personnel in management (i.e. empowerment), the improvement of internal and external communications, development of broader agency philosophies (i.e. vision), and more effective involvement of their constituents in strategic planning (Gasson and White 1993).

We believe that these outcomes can best be achieved employing a Futuring Process in the development of a strategic plan. For instance, the very nature of the ADC program demands a process and an attitude that looks ahead by integrating the organization's past history and current activities with social change to fuel the creative thinking necessary to generate a futuristic vision and plan in order to meet the challenges of the next century. We identified several key elements to a successful FP. First, a management philosophy that believes informed and involved employees will be its leaders of tomorrow and an attitude that it must facilitate their success is essential. This management style will lead to the empowerment of employees, a climate that builds teamwork, and develops a creative and committed staff. Second, a management commitment to listen and to be responsive to employees, constituents, and citizens will pay yet unforeseen dividends in the future. Third, the networking of interested parties with diverse points of view and using collaborative processes such as futuring skills, negotiations, consensus building, and facilitation will gain support for the plan. As a result of these elements, the 1993 Strategic Plan resulted in a broader vision of the future than the previous strategic plan, and it has enjoyed greater support.

In this process, we have also made several mistakes from which others may learn. First, the size of the subcommittees were appropriate for facilitated discussions (e.g. 8 - 10 members), but a greater proportion of the membership should have been representatives from the public. Such a commitment to public involvement has been beneficial in other futuring groups (Norrie 1993, Witter et al. 1993). Second, the final group meeting of all participants to consolidate the vision and recommendations was too large and unwieldy (e.g. over 30 participants). In summary, the ADC Futuring Committee came to realize that we as individuals and as part of a team can plan for and work to achieve the future we desire through the use of the Futuring Process Model, which may best be described using a quote from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow:

Look not mournfully into the Past. It comes not back again. Wisely improve the Present. It is thine. Go forth to meet the shadowy Future, without fear, and with a manly [or womanly] heart.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our sincere thanks to the many people that contributed to the ADC futuring process.

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